Chinese returnees’ conceptions of positive career outcomes after graduating from Australian universities- some key findings

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Background

• Significant presence of Chinese overseas students in Australian higher education

• Growing number of Chinese students return home to work

• Lack of formal study to guide services/program designs
Aim of the study

To capture the range of conceptions of positive career outcomes held by Chinese returnees

- What do Chinese returnees refer to as positive career outcomes?
- What positive career outcomes have they experienced?
- What are the contributing factors to the positive career outcomes?
The study

Mixed methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Returnees</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Returnees Data- Questionnaires

56 respondents from 20 universities

MQ  Sydney  UNSW  Melbourne  UQ  Monash  Deakin  Newcastle  UWS  UOW
UTS  RMIT  QUT  Adelaide  VU  Griffith  ANU  Swinbourne  Curtin  CSU

64 qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UG</th>
<th>GradDip</th>
<th>Master Coursework</th>
<th>Master Research</th>
<th>PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## What do ‘positive career outcomes’ *mean to you?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected outcomes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expected outcomes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strengths</td>
<td>76.47</td>
<td>Enhanced employability</td>
<td>50.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced personal qualities &amp; horizons</td>
<td>72.55</td>
<td>Satisfactory pay</td>
<td>45.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer sense of self and direction</td>
<td>68.63</td>
<td>Enhanced social Status</td>
<td>39.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life fulfilment</td>
<td>64.71</td>
<td>Work in targeted company/industry</td>
<td>37.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make social contribution</td>
<td>56.86</td>
<td>Work in targeted position/level</td>
<td>37.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in targeted occupation/job</td>
<td>54.94</td>
<td>Obtain a recognised qualification</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self-confidence</td>
<td>52.94</td>
<td>Satisfy family needs/expectations</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What ‘positive career outcomes’ have you experienced?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced outcomes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Experienced outcomes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced personal qualities &amp; horizons</td>
<td>58.82</td>
<td>Ability to make social contribution</td>
<td>27.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self-confidence</td>
<td>52.94</td>
<td>Work in targeted occupation/job</td>
<td>27.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced employability</td>
<td>52.94</td>
<td>Enhanced social Status</td>
<td>15.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strengths</td>
<td>49.02</td>
<td>Work in targeted company/industry</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer sense of self and direction</td>
<td>35.29</td>
<td>Work in targeted position/level</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain a recognised qualification</td>
<td>35.29</td>
<td>Satisfy family needs/expectations</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life fulfilment</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>Satisfactory pay</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expected vs. Experienced Positive Career Outcomes

- Clearer sense of self and direction
- Life fulfillment
- Ability to make social contribution
- Work in targeted occupation/job
- Increased self-confidence
- Enhanced employability
- Satisfactory pay
- Enhanced social status
- Work in targeted company/industry
- Work in targeted position/level
- Obtain a recognised qualification
- Satisfy family needs or expectations

Legend:
- Percentage of Respondents Identifying Outcome as 'Positive'
- Percentage of Respondents who had Experienced Outcome Since Graduating
Percentage difference between expected and experienced positive career outcomes

- Obtain a recognised qualification: 4%
- Enhanced employability: 2%
- Increased self-confidence: 0%
- Enhanced personal qualities and horizons: -14%
- Satisfy family needs or expectations: -18%
- Enhanced social status: -24%
- Work in targeted company/industry: -24%
- Work in targeted position/level: -24%
- Ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strengths: -27%
- Work in targeted occupation/job: -27%
- Ability to make social contribution: -29%
- Satisfactory pay: -31%
- Life fulfillment: -31%
- Clearer sense of self and direction: -33%
Contributing factors to positive career outcomes
Increased self-confidence (100%) + international and cultural exposure enhanced employability ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strength
Co-occurrences- example 2

international and cultural exposure

character building from challenges encountered

Experienced ‘work in targeted positions/level’ (85.7%)

development of professional network

the qualification
## Co-occurrences - example 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeared 95% of the time together</th>
<th>Appeared 84% of the time together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enhanced personal qualities &amp; horizons</td>
<td>• Satisfactory pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life Fulfilment</td>
<td>• Enhanced social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearer sense of self and direction</td>
<td>• Enhanced employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased self-confidence</td>
<td>• Ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to make social contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affinity analysis
Analytical angle

Hard vs. Soft currencies (Li, 2012)* 素质 SuZhi

Hard vs. Soft outcomes
Hard vs. Soft contributing factors

Chi-squared test of independence (p value < 0.01)

Returnees questionnaire data

% Difference Expected vs. Experienced

Hard Outcomes

- Obtain a recognised qualification
- Work in targeted company/industry
- Work in targeted position/level
- Satisfactory pay
- Enhanced employability
- Work in targeted occupation/job
- Ability to utilise knowledge/skills/strengths

% Difference Expected vs. Experienced

Soft Outcomes

- Satisfy family needs or expectations
- Enhanced social status
- Increased self-confidence
- Ability to make contribution
- Life-fulfilment
- Clearer sense of self and direction
- Enhanced personal qualities and horizons

-35.00% -30.00% -25.00% -20.00% -15.00% -10.00% -5.00% 0.00% 5.00% 10.00%
More soft outcomes were experienced than expected.
More hard outcomes were expected than experienced.
Discrepancy in soft outcomes larger than in hard outcomes
Returnees: More emphasis on soft contributing factors in i/v data
Employer/Stakeholder Data

Observation (57) in Beijing and Guangzhou:
• 33 employers,
• 7 university reps,
• 17 professional association, industry & government reps

Interviews (18) - data transcribed for analysis
Chi-squared test of independence p<0.01
Conclusion

• Hard and soft outcomes/contributing factors statistically significant concepts

• Data collection methods may yield different results. Interviews yield more soft contributing factors in both returnees and employer/stakeholder data

• Hard/Soft outcomes and contributing factors adequate to use to frame Chinese returnees conceptions of positive career outcomes
Conclusion

• Soft outcomes and soft contributing factors more prevalent than anticipated

• Returnees quantitative findings published in


• Other findings to be published in forthcoming papers.